

REMARKS

Applicant requests reconsideration and allowance of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1-33 and 36-42 are pending in the present application. Claims 1, 7, 13, 18, 19, 21, 26, 31-33, 37, and 39 are the independent claims.

Claim 35 has been cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Claim 33 has been amended. No new matter has been added.

Initially, Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the indication that claims 1-32, 37, and 39-49 are allowed and that claim 35 recites patentable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. By the present Amendment, claim 35 has been cancelled and independent claim 33 has been amended to recite the features of claim 35. Claims 36 and 38 depend from independent claim 33. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that claims 33, 36, and 38 are now in allowable form.

Claims 33, 36, and 38 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,076,915 (Gast et al.) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,390,698 (Yoshida et al.). All rejections are respectfully traversed by the inclusion of subject matter indicated as patentably defining over the citations of record, as explained above.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that the independent claims patentably define the present invention over the citations of record. Further, the dependent claims should also be allowable for the same reasons as their respective base claims and further due to the additional features that they recite. Separate and individual consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

Applicant submits that this Amendment After Final Rejection clearly places the subject application in condition for allowance. This Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicants believed that the prior Amendment placed the subject application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of the instant Amendment as an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues is requested under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116.

Applicant believes that the present Amendment is responsive to each of the points raised by the Examiner in the Official Action. However, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to such

matters.


There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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